



**Urban and Regional Planning in India – A Handbook for Professional Practice.** S. K. Kulshrestha. SAGE Publications India Pvt Ltd, B1/I-1 Mohan Cooperative Industrial Area, Mathura Road, New Delhi 110 044. 2012. 299 pp. Price: Rs 895.

Urban and regional planning is a fascinating subject. It has always intrigued many planners, engineers, scientists, managers, practitioners, etc. as to how humans have used their intellect and wisdom to plan and manage the various cities and regions around the world. The subject of urban and regional planning in India is not new, as there are sufficient references as regards the older, well-planned cities that flourished as successful civilizations. For instance, the Indus (or Harappa) Valley Civilization that dates back to the Vedic era encompassed an area of more than one million square kilometres, and was planned and designed based on the Vedic scripts. Thus, India has been a leader and a role model for the other global civilizations in the urban and regional planning arena during the past.

At present, many regions in India are in dire need of good planning to successfully function only by means of well-read professional planners and practitioners. In the current scenario, this book is indeed a timely addition for all grades of planners: students, fresh graduates, beginners, project managers and established consultants.

As the title indicates, it is a handbook for professional practice, which is fundamentally reflected in the various broad sections from professional ethics in planning, practices and procedures that need to be adopted during the planning process, consultancy activities, legal issues involved in the operation, and

finally an advanced level of the installation of a unit to carry out all the proceedings pertinent to urban and regional planning. The major heads (parts) are clearly laid out with appropriate chapters embedded within each part.

The motivation for authoring the text is explained well in that its core focus is to attract consultancy activities across the various planning projects. With many infrastructure projects coming up in India, a need for this kind of handbook becomes essential, specifically to answer the several questions related to the development and management of the future built-up environment. The solutions emanating from seven queries must meet global demands as well, mainly so that India can build sustainable cities and regions on par with international standards.

The various chapters provide the reader with an exhaustive list of the acronyms and basic definitions of the terminologies used in planning, definitely aimed to help understand the advanced technicalities of the subject. Further, the general professional practices and procedures are described in a lucid manner. A documentation of the Planning Commission and its associated roles is well-illustrated to provide a general awareness of the system (technical and political levels) to the cluster of young planners. Chapter 2 furnishes a wealth of information regarding the Planning Commission members and players at all levels.

As mentioned earlier, the crux of the motivation for this book was to focus on consultancy activities. In this connection, a great deal of information is provided with respect to private sector participation and role of consultants in the projects (chapter 4). Likewise, the following chapter gives an account of the public-private partnership (PPP), which has become a common strategy in many projects in India, mostly always a fruitful venture.

For a country like India to be successful on all fronts at global level, an understanding of the international practices is required. This can only be done if one can study the models adopted worldwide. In this direction, the author has explained the global codes of practices in chapter 6.

Part 3 of the book dealing with consultancy proposals and related areas is of fine quality. Sample calculations of consultancy fees are sharp. Similarly, part 4 representative of legal support in plan-

ning, function-based contract agreements and policies is succinct. Finally, part 5 relevant to the installation of new planning units is smartly delivered, particularly the human resources and personnel management, which are an essential part and parcel of the contingent plan of establishment. The Annexes at the end of the book are helpful for both training and learning purposes.

Although the contents of the book are well-communicated and are of good quality, some important elements could have been added to make the text much more interesting. For instance, the valuable history of urban planning in India might have found a suitable place in the beginning of the text, mainly to give a feel to the reader that the system of urban and regional planning in India is not a new piece of work, and that the designs were based upon rich Vedic scripts. Similarly, a section(s) on how research activities could be integrated with planning might have enticed engineers and scientists as well.

The price of the book seems to be exorbitant, especially if aimed at students and young planners. Also, the book does not contain any rich coloured text and figures, and so the reason for the high pricing is indeed questionable. Contemporaneously, the cover page could have been created better with an actual well-planned city map embossed.

Although the book does not seem to be a research record per se, the material can undoubtedly be a good repository for the library section(s) on planning and management.

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